

# the future of creative commons

Realizing the value of sharing in a digital world

The Creative Commons logo, consisting of two interlocking circles forming a circle, with the letters "cc" in the center.

cc

**Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to ... seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.**

— Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.**

**Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.**

— Article 27, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Online media platforms have been key to expanding both the breadth and depth of material available under Creative Commons licenses. Today, there are over 200 million CC-licensed photos on Flickr and four million CC-licensed YouTube videos. Platforms like these are where many people first encounter Creative Commons licenses and learn how to reuse and remix CC-licensed content.



Gottlieb Jazz Photos, Library of Congress  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wghtml/wghome.html>  
CC0 1.0  
<http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>

**Creative Commons empowers people and institutions to share their creative, scholarly, and other knowledge assets.**

**Our technical tools and legal standards make it possible for educators, artists, bloggers, musicians, and institutions to give permission for their works to be copied, collaged, curated, and redistributed while giving credit to the creator.**

**Sharing and reuse of CC-licensed work happens on some of the world's most popular platforms for user-generated content and across a range of prominent institutions.**

**Creative Commons has thus helped grow a public commons of knowledge and culture.**

Our vision is nothing less than realizing the full potential of the Internet – universal access to research, education, and full participation in culture – for driving a new era of development, growth, and productivity.



# The Internet is vast.

**So too is the untapped potential for people around the world to contribute to the commons. New, yet-to-be-developed tools and products will extend the reach of Creative Commons and stimulate mainstream adoption of our licenses.**

**As platforms and technologies evolve, opportunities must be developed to integrate Creative Commons' legal and technical tools across the Internet, in simple and seamless ways.**

**Creative Commons licenses were designed to help creators utilize the Internet's potential as a place for collaboration without copyright law getting in the way. Since CC was founded, the possibilities for creativity on the Internet have expanded tremendously. CC's products and community must continue to grow and transform too.**

Wikimedia Commons hosts photos, videos, audio files, and more, all licensed to allow derivative works and commercial use. In December of 2012, Wikimedia Commons reached 15 million files, a major milestone that seals Wikimedia Commons' importance as a resource for educational and cultural media. This photo of two European bee-eaters won Wikimedia's 2012 Picture of the Year award.

Pair of Merops apiaster feeding  
Pierre Dalous  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pair\\_of\\_Merops\\_apiaster\\_feeding.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pair_of_Merops_apiaster_feeding.jpg)  
CC BY-SA 3.0  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>



# Empowering Creators to Choose

When Creative Commons launched, it was evident that digital technologies offered unprecedented opportunities for individuals to make and disseminate creative works, to build on others' contributions, and to collaborate in previously unimaginable ways.

The Internet gave musicians, artists, authors, and scholars a new platform no longer restricted by traditional boundaries. Yet, the complexity of copyright law stood as an obstacle to the ideal of creative collaboration and sharing.

Copyright automatically bestows upon creators exclusive rights to reproduce, distribute, and modify what they create. The default status is "all rights reserved." Yet, many creators do not realize that they are copyright owners, or what legal terminology allows them to share and invite others to reuse their work. Therefore, the opportunity to share often goes untapped.

The machine-readable licenses that Creative Commons launched in 2002 provide the legal means to share on terms less restrictive than copyright. The licenses are standardized legal deeds that creators can attach to their song, photograph, article, or other work to clearly authorize sharing under "some rights reserved" terms.

Creative Commons offers to the public a menu of licenses to choose from to permit reproduction and other reuse. All licenses require proper attribution to the creator. Most importantly, CC licenses give creators the power to choose.



The creators who thrive today are the ones who use Internet distribution most intelligently. In fact, the ones who are most generous with their work often reap the most reward. People used to think of reuse as stealing; today, not letting others use your work can mean irrelevance.

— Cathy Casserly, CEO, Creative Commons

The six Creative Commons licenses provide a simple vocabulary for what would otherwise be a complicated agreement between creator and licensee. By selecting a license, copyright holders choose which rights they'd like to keep and what types of reuse to allow.

# The Opportunity Today

The social and economic value of sharing content with open licenses is well documented. In education, openly licensed content proffers enormous cost savings over traditional textbooks.

In science and medicine, shared access to research can help save lives and encourage interdisciplinary efforts to accelerate problem solving. In government and philanthropy, where tax dollars and charitable contributions support the public good, open licensing ensures the results of investments are made available to the broader public and can be continually built upon.

On major websites, embedded CC licenses enable anyone, anywhere to join the participatory and collaborative culture and creatively use, improve on, and remix educational content, videos, music, and photos. The net-positive impact of open licensing is evident.

Despite this success, Creative Commons is still far from realizing the full potential of its vision. Overreliance on traditional practices hinders adoption of novel approaches while advances pose new challenges and opportunities.

Today the majority of the world's population has access to the Internet and accordingly, the means to create and engage with each other. Creative Commons must continue to serve the needs of this changing world in which spectators have become active creators.

Creative Commons-licensed educational materials aren't just free; they're alive. Open educational resources (OER) grow and transform as educators adapt them and share their versions. That's why educators, students, and governments are making investments in OER.



The increased worldwide attention on open educational resources has opened doors to exciting new possibilities for collaboration and rapid curriculum development. In 2012, a group of Finnish educators, students, and math enthusiasts spent a weekend together writing a CC-licensed secondary mathematics textbook. Today, the project has expanded to a full series of math texts being used in schools around Finland, all freely available and openly licensed.

Oppikirjamaratont  
Senja Opettaa  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/senjaopettaa/>  
sets/72157631640938914/  
CC BY 2.0  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

# Our Mandate for Tomorrow

Our overall vision and strategic priorities are accomplished through targeted activities involving a diverse range of institutions and communities interested in sharing. Looking ahead:

We will continue to cultivate the growth and diversity of knowledge and cultural resources in the shared global commons.

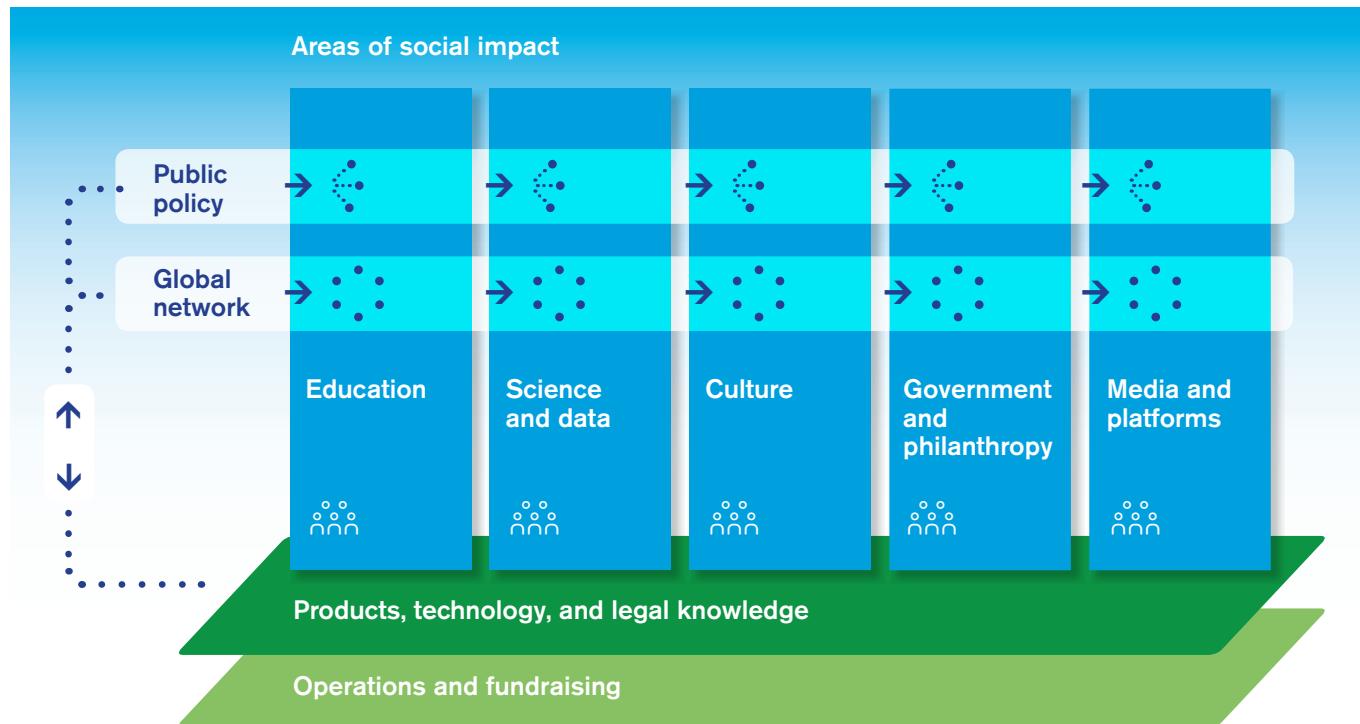
We will develop a road map for product development to steer the creation and promotion of new legal and technical tools that meet the needs of our users and synchronize with emerging technologies.

We will invest in the support and expansion of our network of affiliates across the globe.

We will work with platforms to extend our reach into popular and domain-specific communities.

We will develop a strong organizational and financial base in order to accomplish these priorities and to ensure long-term sustainability.

Creative Commons engages with communities of practice that bring about the greatest social good through use of CC tools. Our strategy for change employs expertise, outreach, and support via a global network of affiliates and engagement with policymakers.





**flickr**

**WIKIPEDIA**

Brooklyn Museum

**YouTube**

**FEMA**

KHANACADEMY

**MIT  
OCW**

**CK-12**

SIYAVULA

**P2PU**

OER Africa



## CC & Culture

From individual, independent performers to big-name commercial artists to galleries and government archives, Creative Commons is the standard for open licensing for creative works.

Since Creative Commons launched, it's been embraced by cutting-edge artists who recognize the limitations of the "all rights reserved" default. Today, those artists have been joined by a new generation of creators using open licensing to build new business models. As composer Chris Zabriskie wrote on his decision to release all of his music under the CC Attribution license, "You have to think outside the very dusty box if you want anyone to hear what you do, let alone buy it."



## CC & Education

Open educational resources (OER) released under Creative Commons licenses – such as textbooks, courses, and lesson plans – are easy to find, easy to share, and easy to customize and combine. With CC licenses, learners can find and incorporate freely accessible materials for reports and presentations, educators can customize textbooks and lesson plans, universities can distribute video lectures to a global audience, and publishers can adapt materials and develop services for an enhanced learning experience.

Educators, students, schools, and governments are investing in open education in big ways, and those investments are paying off. In 2012 alone, the governments of Poland, California, and British Columbia passed major legislation in support of OER, and the United States Department of Labor is awarding \$2 billion (over four years) in grants for OER development.

Taken in aggregate, these commitments represent a major shift in how the world thinks about education. And thanks to open licensing, students and teachers will be able to reuse and adapt those resources worldwide.



## CC & Government

We're strong believers that publicly funded resources should be openly licensed and freely available. Since the beginning of Creative Commons, governments and public institutions have leveraged CC licenses and public domain tools to share their data, publicly funded research, educational and cultural content, and other digital materials. Numerous countries around the world have adopted open licensing requirements for their own content and data, resources created by grantees, or both. Governments from Kenya to Australia to Poland license government-created and/or government-funded works under CC.

A massive amount of work is ahead, and with a committed community of advocates, interested governmental departments, and open-minded policymakers, we can together work toward a close integration of open licensing in the public sector. If we do so, governments can better support their populations with the information they need, increase the effectiveness of the public's investment, and contribute to a true global commons.



## CC & Science

Creative Commons licenses are at the center of a major shift in how scientific research is conducted and shared. Organizations like Public Library of Science have led the charge in making science publishing CC-licensed. More traditional publishing stalwarts like Nature Publishing Group have quickly joined the movement too, adding CC licensing options to their publications. Meanwhile, startups like figshare are exploring new ways to help scientists share data and findings with each other in real time.

In 2012, Creative Commons joined 65,000 people in support of a petition to the White House, asking that scientific research that's funded by the US government be available freely over the Internet. In 2013, the White House responded with a directive requiring that its 19 largest federal agencies create policies to "ensure that the public can read, download, and analyze in digital form final peer-reviewed manuscripts or final published documents."

As Creative Commons' community has grown and diversified, community members have started using CC licenses in ways that no one would have originally imagined. Licenses that function across different mediums and specialties open possibilities for combining and mixing wildly divergent types of content.



Crypton's virtual singer Hatsune Miku has performed in sold-out concerts all over the world. A big part of Miku's success is a creative community of fans who create their own recordings and videos starring Miku and a cast of other virtual characters. In 2012, Crypton acknowledged the community's role in its success by licensing Miku and related characters under Creative Commons. According to entrepreneur and CC board member Joi Ito, "Hatsune Miku is an amazingly unique, inspiring, and successful example of how sharing pulls together communities and empowers an explosion of creativity. I'm so excited that Creative Commons can now be part of that story."

Crypton Future Media characters  
Crypton Future Media  
[http://piapro.net/en\\_for\\_creators.html](http://piapro.net/en_for_creators.html)  
CC BY-NC 3.0  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>

## Guiding Principles

**Creative Commons is bounded by a core set of guiding principles:**

**The Commons is best optimized with a trusted steward.**

**For the Commons to succeed, it must interoperate.**

**A voluntary, open, and participatory community optimizes the likelihood of success.**

**The potential for sharing through open licensing has barely been tapped.**

**Creative expression is critical to a vibrant Internet.**



## Five Strategic Priorities

- 1 Steward the Global Commons
- 2 Develop Innovative Products
- 3 Strengthen the Affiliate Network
- 4 Increase Platform Use
- 5 Ensure Sustainability

# Priority 1

## Steward the Global Commons

Stewardship is an integral part of Creative Commons' mission, history, and future. We are a steward of the Commons; a leader and trusted broker; a champion of open standards, policies, and practices.

In its role as steward, Creative Commons ensures the Internet is a place of sharing, innovation, and collaboration. We support interoperability of different open licensing schemes and the global community of open license users through policy advocacy, outreach, and education.

### Key Stewardship Activities

Engage the Creative Commons global affiliate network and international community in developing and implementing Creative Commons Version 4.0 license suite.

Grow Creative Commons' presence in international policy arenas where open policies are debated, and advocate for the adoption and implementation of open policies through the creation of an Open Policy Network.

Launch and promote the School of Open to educate prospective users about copyright law and open licensing.

Document and demonstrate the economic and social value of sharing knowledge, creative works, educational materials, research, and data.



## Priority 2

# Develop Innovative Products

**It is through technology that CC licenses enable people to share their cultural works and learning resources, and to reuse and remix the work of others. It is thus critical for Creative Commons to keep pace with evolving technologies and outside innovation. Our tomorrow is about enabling people to build on and remix the multitude of shared works in the Commons.**

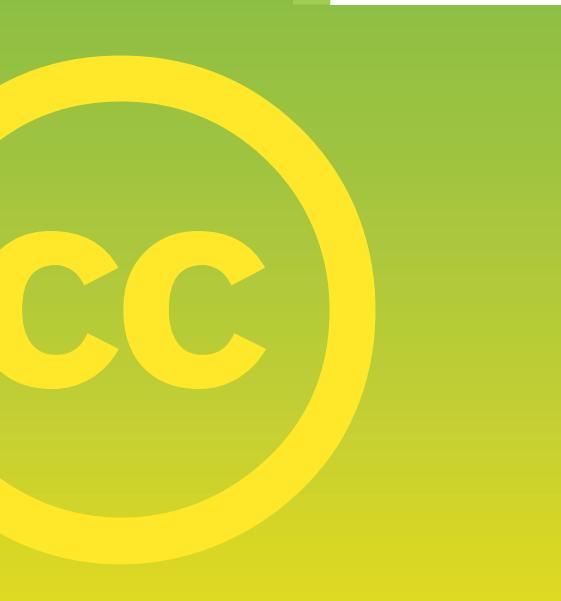
**Building on top of the CC license suite and existing resources, we will break ground with new products to serve and grow the CC user community, and to address mission-critical issues in today's digital environment. We will develop and systematically test a targeted pipeline of products, and launch the products proven to have the highest potential impact and scalability. We will leverage the power of the open source community and our network of peer organizations to help us.**

### Key Product Activities

Develop a core platform or interactive framework to engage users by showing how their content is being reused by others, and to motivate further contributions to the Commons. Via this product, collect data on reuse to demonstrate the vibrancy of the Commons.

Enhance the technological means for users to communicate around shared CC-licensed content, connecting authors and creators with remixers and reusers. A more deeply engaged and connected user community will demonstrate the power and usefulness of sharing and grow the Commons.

Build a community of volunteers around the development of products, institutionalize this community through a governance structure, and create guidelines for participation. Form a technical and product advisory group to bring seasoned and external expertise to bear on product strategy.



# Priority 3

## Strengthen the Affiliate Network

The Creative Commons Affiliate Network includes more than 70 affiliate groups around the world, as well as many informal community groups and individual volunteers. The network donates expertise and time to promote the mission in many ways, from sharing legal expertise and educating the public about open licensing, to holding local events.

Regional Coordinators help ensure the smooth functioning of this global network, encouraging affiliate engagement and facilitating relations among and between affiliates and CC headquarters. Affiliate groups are ambassadors, each linked to a local institution such as a law office, university, or nonprofit organization.

Affiliates know the local culture, laws, norms, government protocols, and language(s), and can more easily connect, both physically and culturally, with communities and policymakers. They expand CC's reach far beyond what would ever be possible by CC's core full-time staff.

### Key Affiliate Network Activities

Foster a culture of collaboration and mutual support among affiliates. Establish effective communication channels through which affiliates can mentor one another and share their expertise with each other and the entire organization.

Develop and provide support for the reuse of tools, resources, and training materials. Support programs and initiatives that may be easily localized and translated for use by Creative Commons' global affiliate network.

Collaboratively develop a broader network strategy. Support the development of new affiliate organizations in jurisdictions with an interest in the Creative Commons mission.



# Priority 4

## Increase Platform Use

Creative Commons licenses have enabled new businesses to thrive and are embedded in some of the largest platforms on the Internet. These platforms maximize our reach into both popular and domain-specific communities and build a broader awareness of open licenses.

Internationally, in the social and public sectors, organizations and institutions also adopt CC licenses on their platforms to lower cost and improve access to knowledge in education, science, and government.

Creative Commons will increase outreach and support to existing and potential platform adopters in order to improve the implementation of our licenses on platforms, recommend ways to communicate the value of CC licenses to platform user communities, and increase platform adoptions of CC licenses.

### Key Platform Activities

Cultivate relationships with new platforms, and by extension, their communities to reach a broader audience and user base.

Strengthen alliances with existing platform adopters through provision of support resources for implementation and ongoing use.

Encourage content curation in communities of practice that use CC licenses, on platforms and in repositories. Provide guidance and training resources to help user communities reuse and remix CC-licensed content.

Enhance public perception and awareness of Creative Commons and its mission through targeted cross-promotional activities and events. Position Creative Commons for higher visibility alongside key platforms in all domains.



# Priority 5

## Ensure Sustainability

Increasing organizational effectiveness and securing adequate resources for strategic priorities are critical steps on Creative Commons' path to long-term sustainability.

Over 2013–15, Creative Commons will work towards the following essential elements of sustainability: secure funds for core needs, develop a long-term revenue model, and ensure a strong organizational culture and structure.

### Key Elements of Organizational Effectiveness

There is a shared organizational culture and a staff of talented people with deep expertise and diverse skills, established networks, and a passion for cultivating openness in practice, culture, and community.

The governance of the organization is comprised of engaged board members who provide strong organizational oversight, serve as public representatives, and offer diverse expertise, support, and networks.

Strategic communications and transparency measures are implemented to increase awareness, associate brand with mission, and improve community engagement.

Technology developments are well documented in an open environment that encourages collaboration and input from external contributors.



# Our Approach to Fundraising

Creative Commons relies on foundations, corporations, and individuals to provide philanthropic support for initiatives that increase our global footprint and impact.

The range of activities that drive our success can only be sustained if a strong organizational base supports them. To secure resources through 2015, we will:

Build an alliance of funding partners to support core operations and planned activities.

Advance corporate sponsorship opportunities for in-kind and monetary support.

Diversify funding sources through a range of targeted fundraising efforts.

Cultivate and retain an engaged and committed donor base.

In parallel with this fundraising approach, we will undertake an in-depth exploration of social enterprise models and potential new revenue streams. By identifying a steady long-term revenue source we will mitigate risk, free up resources to support innovation, and ensure adaptability and sustainability of the organization.

# Scaling the Commons

Based on statistics from media platforms with built-in CC functionality, we know that there are over 500 million CC-licensed works. That's a big number, but it only begins to reflect the vast array of materials with CC licenses, the multitude of ways in which those licensed materials are used and reused every day, and the diversity of the Creative Commons community.

## Did you know?

**500:** Number of one-terabyte hard drives required to download every Creative Commons-licensed photo on Flickr.

**\$0:** The cost for students to use job training materials produced under the US Department of Labor's two-billion-dollar Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Initiative.

**609:** Number of volunteers working around the world in Creative Commons' affiliate network.

**40:** Number of years it would take to watch all 4 million CC-licensed videos on YouTube.

**715:** Number of new, CC BY-SA-licensed articles contributed to Wikipedia in English every day.

**59,000:** Number of articles published by Public Library of Science under the CC Attribution license. On average, each article is viewed over 2,000 times.

**90:** Number of high-quality, CC-licensed university textbooks to be created through recent government initiatives in British Columbia and California.

**30:** Number of gatherings that took place around the world in celebration of Creative Commons' tenth anniversary.

**1:** Number of gatherings that took place in Antarctica in celebration of Creative Commons' tenth anniversary.





People are open and willing to share, and the CC model makes sense. Look how many people are allowing their content to be used for commercial purposes. It's amazing that people are open to allow for others to make money from the things they create, as long as they're cited. That's great, and I think it's really important.

— Blake Whitman, VP of creative development, Vimeo

Blake Whitman  
Dave Dugdale  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/davedugdale/6215247498/>  
CC BY-SA 2.0  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>



Jamlab introduced School of Open ideals to young girls in the Precious Blood School in Kenya. The response was overwhelming. Soon, we were discussing the value of open in a world where "withheld" is what feels secure. They are now working on releasing short videos of their teachers teaching various subjects, licensing them under Creative Commons, and uploading them to YouTube. They are doing this for the thousands of young people who don't get a chance to go to high school in Kenya.

— Kasyoka Mutunga, executive director of Jamlab

Kasyoka Mutunga  
CC BY-NC-SA 3.0  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>



Our phenomenal growth is entirely driven by free and open distribution. CC licensing has enabled sharing in ways well beyond what we could have done on our own. When we decided to open our library, we had one single goal: to spread ideas. A Creative Commons license clearly communicates that you are really serious about the spread of ideas.

— June Cohen, executive producer of TED Media

June Cohen  
Red Maxwell  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/48692800@N00/4348001166/>  
CC BY-NC 2.0  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/>



Creative Commons enables us to connect with people from other cultures, share ideas, and solve problems together. It is a tool that gives voice to creativity, and allows us to share symbolic space within society, charting alternative routes to inclusion across the continents, in all languages. I believe that open tools such as Creative Commons are essential for creating better societies. We have a lot to learn from each other.

— Renata Avila, CC Guatemala Project Lead

Renata Avila  
Joi Ito  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/joi/4165970268/>  
CC BY 2.0  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>



As a writer, my problem is not piracy, it's obscurity, and CC licenses turn my books into dandelion seeds, able to blow in the wind and find every crack in every sidewalk, sprouting up in unexpected places.

— Cory Doctorow, author

Cory Doctorow  
NK Guy, nk guy.com.tiff  
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Creative Commons ensures that others can use the papers we publish without requiring the additional time and cost that asking special permissions would require. It ensures that translators and educators know they are free to use the research we publish and it allows Wikipedia editors to enrich this critical reference work with text and resources from the research literature.

— Peter Jerram, PLOS

Peter Jerram  
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Over the past decade, Creative Commons has become the standard internationally for sharing creative works. But that's just the beginning. The next ten years will be all about tapping the potential of the global community of Commoners to build a more open Internet and a freer world.

— Lawrence Lessig, Co-founder, Creative Commons

Design: EXBROOK

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